



Strategic Plan 2006-2011  
**Office of the Deaf & Hard  
of Hearing**

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### **Purpose of This Document**

This strategic plan communicates how we will advance our mission and goals in a changing environment and meet our future challenges, so that we can better serve the most vulnerable populations in Washington State. This document is a road map that guides the business policies and improvement strategies for our organization, employees and partners.

### **Acknowledgements**

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ODHH Staff

Office of Assistant Secretary, Health and Rehabilitative Services Administration

DSHS/TRS Advisory Committee

(6) Six Regional Service Centers on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind Stakeholders

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# Executive Summary

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The Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) Strategic Plan 2006-2011 marks a new era of bringing ODHH into the 21<sup>st</sup> century utilizing the latest technology to achieve functionally equivalent communication access. The strategic plan is a living document with a breath of innovative solutions to long-standing barriers. With me, Eric Raff, as the new Director at the helm of ODHH comes a fresh vision; building upon a legacy left by my predecessor, Leon Curtis who dedicatedly served for the last twenty-three years before retiring. For the past year, ODHH has been undergoing an organizational transformation to build greater capacity to do more for the constituents we serve with dwindling resources. This capacity-building includes a review and shift in strategy, fiscal policy, delivery system of existing programs and services, human resources and information technology. Through this organizational transformation, it is my expressed desire that a measurable achievement be an enhanced emphasis on government accessibility and client self-sufficiency. The enormity of the challenges ahead of us can be easily overcome with greater collaborative partnerships with our constituents and entities from all three sectors: the public, private and nonprofit sectors. Join me, the ODHH-team and our partners to take ownership of the strategic plan and making the vision a reality.

Your public servant,



Eric Raff; Director



# Chapter 1 • Our Guiding Directions

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## **VISION**

The Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) envisions a cohesive community of deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind and speech challenged persons empowered to enjoy society's benefits and opportunities without communication barriers.

## **MISSION**

The mission of ODHH is to improve the quality of life for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind and speech challenged by ensuring equal communication access and strengthening awareness and service collaboration between DSHS agencies, nonprofits, businesses and the communities.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES/CORE VALUES**

- Equal Access
- Communication Choices
- Self-Actualization
- Transparency
- Civic Participation
- Diversity Appreciation

## **STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

### **United States of America (Federal)**

- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 – mandates reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities to ensure access to and full participation in services offered by government and businesses and to provide equal employment opportunities, as well as establishing for the provision of telecommunications relay services.
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 – mandates reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities to allow full access to and participation in public and private programs and services receiving federal funds.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act – mandates states to provide a free and appropriate education to all children with disabilities.
- Telecommunication Act of 1996, as amended, Section 225:- mandates establishment of relay services for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing; Section 255 requires that telecommunications service providers and manufacturers ensure that their telecommunications services and products are usable to the greatest extent possible by persons with disabilities

**Revised Code of Washington (Washington State)**

- RCW 43.20(A).720, et.seq. – authorizes the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, under the auspices of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), to administer and fund for the provision of telecommunications and distribution of specialized telecommunication equipment.
- Chapter 49.60 RCW – mandates the provision of reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities in places of employment, government and businesses.

**Washington Administrative Code**

WAC 388-43-001, et.seq – authority to provide social and human services through contracts with regional service centers serving the deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing.



## Chapter 2 • The People We Serve

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### INTRODUCTION TO PROGRAMS

ODHH is organized under the Health and Rehabilitative Services Administration (HRSA) located within the Department of Social and Health Services, in Olympia, Washington. ODHH provides an array of services to the deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind communities throughout Washington State. There are approximately 506,000 individuals with a hearing loss in Washington, including 12,600 individuals who are profoundly deaf. Services include provision of telecommunication relay services, distribution of specialized telecommunication equipment, provision of social and human services through contracts with Regional Service Centers on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, communication access via an infrastructure of videoconferencing sites, information, referral and advocacy activities, outreach and training activities.

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

#### **Telecommunication Relay Service (TRS)**

The Telecommunication Relay Service eliminates barriers to the telecommunication infrastructure, by adhering to the goal of achieving functionally equivalent access to the telephone as a person with normal hearing and clear speech would. Telephone calls are typically conducted through a communication assistant who facilitates the telephone conversation. A contract with a telecommunication relay provider provides an array of relay features matching the consumer's degree of hearing loss or speech challenges and preferred communication method. Outreach activities are conducted to heighten public awareness and promote consumer self-sufficiency to utilize relay services effectively. Consumers may file complaints or submit feedback with ODHH which is reported to the Federal Communications Commission. ODHH works with the relay vendor to resolve consumer complaints.

#### **Telecommunication Equipment Distribution (TED)**

Formerly known as Telecommunication Access Service (TAS), the program will be renamed. Per regulations, eligible consumers apply to receive specialized telecommunication equipment and receive training to effectively utilize the equipment. Specialized telecommunication equipment distributed matches the consumers' degree of hearing loss or speech challenges and preferred communication method. The equipment enables the consumer to access the telecommunication relay services or to make direct telephone calls with other parties having similar equipment.

#### **Social and Human Services (SHS)**

Contracts with several Regional Service Centers on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing throughout the state allow for an array of social and human services provision. Social and Human Services is a new name for the long-standing ODHH practice of contracting with these centers. Currently the scope of services includes: information and referral, outreach and advocacy for communication access. In the future, the scope of services will place heavier emphasis on direct client services such as independent living skills training and employment-related activities. The centers play a vital role in providing educational, cultural, recreational and social opportunities and making their facilities available to local and regional grassroots

community-based nonprofit organizations.

#### **Communication Access Network (CAN)**

Formerly known as "Video Communications", the program will be renamed. It is an ongoing infrastructure of videoconferencing sites being established throughout Washington State within DSHS agencies, the regional service centers, and service providers. Each site includes a workstation utilizing the latest videoconferencing technologies. The functionality of these sites will be refined to include access to video relay services, remote sign language interpreting, remote real-time captioning and face-to-face interpersonal communications. Technical assistance, outreach and training activities are provided to DSHS and other state agencies.

#### **Assistive Communication Technology (ACT)**

Historically, a series of special projects have been conducted to benefit the hard of hearing and deafblind communities. The tradition of serving these communities will be formalized through the provision of assistive listening device systems, captioning and other assistive technology. The creation of this program will pave the way toward a service integration initiative: a referral system to provide auxiliary aids on behalf of DSHS through ODHH and regional service centers. The provision of existing and emerging technologies will fulfill the reasonable accommodations mandate to ensure equal communication access to DSHS agencies, programs and services.

#### **Information and Referral, Advocacy (IRA)**

The provision of general information and referral services is typically conducted by regional service centers. However, the content quality and extent of these resources vary from center-to-center. The information and referral function within the regional service centers may be phased out and transitioned to ODHH. Benefits will include an enhanced standard in the content quality and quantity of national, US regions and state-wide information resources. It would also redirect existing contract dollars to direct client services. The regional service centers will utilize ODHH resources and continue to provide information and referral to local resources in their respective service delivery areas.

Advocacy services on behalf of individuals will continue to be under the purview of the regional service centers. Advocacy typically focuses on communication access to products, services and employment in the private, public and nonprofit sectors. The role of the ODHH is to advocate for systematic transformations through revised regulations, policies and contracted services on a statewide or regional basis. ODHH may be requested to intervene for individuals needing access to a state government program or service. ODHH may also develop a standardized curriculum for client advocacy to be utilized for a proposed statewide training session of all regional service centers community advocates.

#### **Outreach and Training (OT)**

Outreach and training are designed toward different target audiences including professionals, organizations, and deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind communities. Outreach and training comprise activities such as diversity initiatives, exhibits at community events and conferences, publications and presentations. Outreach activities heighten the public profile and awareness of ODHH programs, deaf culture, and other issues pertaining to hearing loss. Training activities instill sensitivity awareness with the knowledge and skills to DSHS staff, interested agencies and vendors to effectively serve the deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind individuals. The

quality of training activities will be enhanced with a revision of the training curriculum which includes TTY training, awareness of deaf culture and legal reasonable accommodation obligations to provide auxiliary aids.

**Emergency Communication Services**

ODHH contracts with the Washington State E-911 Emergency Access Program, operated under the auspices of the Community Service Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, to provide training to deaf, deaf-blind, hard of hearing consumers on how to access E-911 services, as well as training Public Service Answering Point (PSAP) professionals to receive and handle calls from TTY users. The E-911 Access Program is also contracted to consult on and advocate for the provision of public service announcements in accessible formats for emergency management activities related to anti-terrorism and environmental disaster events.



## Chapter 3 • Environmental Context

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### APPRAISAL OF EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

**Telecommunication Trends** - The telecommunication industry is experiencing transformation at such a rapid pace that it becomes difficult, if not impossible, for ODHH to monitor these national trends. ODHH is a small agency with insufficient in-house expertise that is being stretched with oversight of other ODHH programs and services. ODHH will be exploring ways to enhance exchange of information with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC) to assist in the assessments of these trends and foster greater information exchange.

Observations of the national trends pose significant challenges. The societal migration from landline telephones to wireless telephones (cellular) presents an impact on revenue as ODHH does not have collection authority for wireless telephones. The portability of telephone numbers may or may not encourage the acceleration of this migration. Emerging technology such as Internet Protocol Telephony (IP-Telephony) utilized by corporations and government also presents a serious risk to the revenue stream. The infrastructure for landlines consists of Public Box Switches (PBX). With PBXs, a single line goes into a PBX and is split into many lines as extensions. The switchover from PBXs to IP-Telephony would have a drastic impact on the revenue stream. For instance, a building may have 130 switched access points on which excise taxes are collected. If the corporation owning the building transfer call traffic to IP-Telephony, the number of collectible switching points could potentially be reduced to 37.

**The Federal Communication Commission (FCC)** - The FCC regulates the administering of Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Title IV mandates the requirement to provide telecommunication relay services on the states and telecommunication providers. The intent of this mandate is to ensure that people with hearing loss and speech challenges achieve functionally equivalent access to telecommunication services. The FCC often issues rulings with new requirements that impact the states' capacity to comply and impose additional costs to implement. With anticipation in the foreseeable future of these rulings, ODHH and the Office of Financial Management have agreed to set aside \$900k in reserves for such contingencies.

**National Exchange Carrier Association (NECA)** - All telecommunication providers are required to contribute less than one percentage (>1%) of its' revenue into an interstate TRS fund administered by NECA. This contribution fulfills the telecommunication providers' obligation to provide relay services as a mechanism to simplify the implementation complexity of the ADA Title IV mandate and regulations. The NECA fund reimburses the telecommunication relay provider awarded a contract with a particular state and subsidizes 51% of interstate calls (Washington-to-another state) on a price-per-minute (PPM) basis. The state of Washington's ODHH subsidizes 49% of interstate calls and 100% of intrastate calls (calls within Washington). The NECA fund itself will face a foreseeable depletion of reserves.

**Emerging Relay Technologies** - The FCC has ruled that the new Internet-protocol Relay (IP-Relay) and the Video Relay Service (VRS) features on the internet platform are eligible for 100% subsidization of both interstate and intrastate calls from the

NECA interstate TRS fund. This is due to inability of current technology to identify the origin of calls made on the internet. There is no way to detect where a call is originating to determine whether it is an interstate or intrastate call. The PPM is significantly higher than telephone calls conducted across landlines and wireless infrastructure using conventional telecommunication relay services. With the pressure of NECA fund depletion on the FCC and as utilization of internet technology to identify call origination becomes widespread, ODHH is expecting the FCC to make a ruling in 2007 or earlier to require the states to begin absorbing subsidization costs of 49% for interstate calls and 100% for intrastate calls using these emerging relay technologies.

An overview of how the states and NECA currently\* fund the provision of relay services on a price-per-minute (PPM) basis follows:

	TRS		IP-Relay		VRS	
	NECA	ODHH	NECA	ODHH	NECA	ODHH
<b>Interstate</b>	51%	49%	100%	0%	100%	0%
<b>Interstate</b>	\$1.32	**	\$1.32	\$0	\$7.75	\$0
<b>Intrastate</b>	0%	100%	100%	0%	100%	0%
<b>Intrastate</b>	\$0	**	\$1.32	\$0	\$7.75	\$0

\* As of 3/31/04 \*\* Proprietary Information

**Service Delivery System Trends** – Several states’ public utility commissions are facing challenges with disability-related agencies and groups experiencing budget cuts. These disability-related agencies and groups desire to draw upon surcharges (relay funds) for non-relay services; particularly purchase of assistive technology devices that are not related to telecommunications. In a few other states, similar agencies serving the deaf and hard of hearing are facing challenges with the statewide movement to consolidate disability services into one agency as a cost-saving measure. However, consolidation does not necessarily translate into an effective mechanism of providing quality services. Typically, needs of the largest disability group, deaf and hard of hearing, tend to fall under the shadow of needs for more vocal disability groups. Other disability groups tend to focus on the physical aspect of the disability whereas deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind needs relates to the communication aspect. Ironically, it’s these communication barriers that inhibit activism and vocalization of their needs.

## TRENDS IN CUSTOMER CHARACTERISTICS

Hearing loss spans the continuum of society regardless of ethnicity, religious or economic status. There are approximately 506,000 individuals with a hearing loss in Washington, including 12,600 individuals who are deaf and 350 individuals who are deafblind. Washington State has a large deafblind population. Of the fifty states, only Louisiana has a larger deaf-blind population.

The customer base served by ODHH varies on a program level. For instance, the Telephone Relay Service and Telecommunication Equipment Distribution program serves individuals with speech challenges who do not have hearing loss. The social and human services provided through the regional service centers’ caseloads comprise 65% of the individuals served who live at or below the federal poverty levels.

Deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind and speech challenged individuals face communication barriers in every facet of daily life. Obstacles and barriers persist within the private, public and nonprofit sectors. Barriers to obtain medical, education, mental health, substance abuse, employment, legal, financial and other services in society persist and downgrade the quality of life. Individuals living in rural areas face greater accessibility barriers to service delivery systems due to lack of prerequisite expertise and resources. Individuals of ethnic background including African-American, Native Americans and Asian-Americans have been grossly underserved as they may not be aware of the resources available to them.

Within the deaf communities, the significant need continues to be employment opportunities through more effective job placement and supported employment activities. Advocacy among the deaf community is underutilized; due to a lack of empowerment. Effective awareness, education and training are sorely needed. Independent living care with one-on-one training has been an identified need. Aging deaf citizens are voicing the need for specialized housing to obtain assisted living, partial care and nursing services. Retention, certification and training in the sign language interpreting profession need to be addressed. Other areas of concern involve the scarcity of qualified and certified legal interpreters for the judicial process/courts and lack of youth leadership training opportunities. It is crucial to note a subset population within the deaf communities, individuals who are both deaf and developmental disabled. The Division of Developmental Disabilities funds housing and supported living programs to serve this unique subset population. There is a concern that some deaf & developmental disabled individuals have yet to be identified within institutions or communities who may be eligible for appropriate services.

Within the hard of hearing communities, the main grievance is the lack of readily-available auxiliary aids to obtain functionally equivalent communication access to government programs and services. Typically, a state agency would provide a sign language interpreter without the realization that captioning and/or assistive listening device systems are the more appropriate auxiliary aids to accommodate their degree of hearing loss and preferred communication method. A significant issue has been the need for legislation requiring insurance and health care plans to define hearing aids as a prosthesis and thus eligible for coverage. Last, but not least, is the hard of hearing preference for the expensive CapTel (Captioned Telephone) service, an enhanced version of Voice Carry-Over (VCO), a Telecommunication Relay Service feature.

Within the deafblind communities, the pressing concerns are employment opportunities, additional funding for special support provider (SSP) and technological equipment and training opportunities for functionally equivalent access to telecommunications and the internet. Additionally, the need for a larger pool of qualified and certified interpreters for the deafblind has been a recurring issue. Historically, the deafblind community has been underserved and has a higher unemployment rate due to a lack of a clearly designated agency responsible for meeting its needs. Sometimes members of this community slip through the array of services offered by ODHH, the Department of Services for the Blind and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Last but not least, the parents of deaf infants, toddlers and children should be recognized as a core customer group. Washington State is one of two remaining states in the United States that does not have a mandatory newborn hearing and

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screening infrastructure. Newborn hearing and screening provided by hospitals has been largely voluntary and is concentrated along the I-5 corridor in western Washington. Early intervention services for age birth-3 are barely nonexistent and for age 3-6 are fragmented. There are inadequate resources for parent support groups, training to assert educational rights, and opportunities for deaf children of hearing parents and hearing children with deaf parents to interact. Deaf children often have no exposure to deaf role models nor afforded mentorship opportunities.

Overall, the trends in customer characteristics indicate an increasing number of aging baby boomers with progressive hearing loss. This indicates an increase in the overall total of hard of hearing and late-deafened people. Progressive hearing loss will require greater prevention awareness and coping strategies. Many late-deafened adults and deaf children are obtaining cochlear implants, a surgical procedure to create digital hearing. Deaf children with cochlear implants are particularly prevalent in Spokane. Cochlear implantation has typically been controversial within the deaf culture as it is viewed as a cultural versus medical issue. However, tolerance and acceptance is slowly spreading within the deaf communities. The concern is a biased citation of "success rates" by some professionals regarding deaf children with cochlear implants and their ability to communicate. As these children reach adulthood, the impact on demands for ODHH programs and services remains to be seen. Another trend of concern is the increasing number of deaf K-12 students in a mainstream environment who have an inadequate and fragmented system of support services and insufficient numbers of qualified teachers of the deaf and educational interpreters. These future generations of new customers are likely to have needs and issues different from the customers presently served by ODHH.

## **ACTIVITY LINKS TO MAJOR PARTNERS**

### **National Organizations and Associations**

ODHH is a member of national associations including the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), Self Help for the Hard of Hearing (SHHH), American Association of the Deaf Blind (AADB), Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), Telecommunications for the Deaf (TDI), National Association of State Relay Administrators (NASRA), Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program Administrators (TEDPA), and State Telecommunication Administrators of Relay by Sprint (STARS) among others.

As a member of these national organizations and associations, ODHH is privy to trends in service delivery systems within the public and nonprofit sectors and changes in laws and regulations. Membership is also a vehicle to foster greater exchange of information allowing state-by-state comparison of statutes, regulations, policies and other relevant programmatic areas.

### **Washington State Government**

- Three of four ODHH staff participating in the Washington Certified Public Manager program at the South Puget Sound Community College have capstone projects involving cross-collaboration initiatives with several Departments:
- **Department of Licensing** - The Communication Access Network program manager is working with the Department of Licensing to install video clips with instructions in American Sign Language on the driver license manual, application and test for deaf individuals with limited English proficiency.



- **Department of Health** - The Assistive Communication Technology program manager is working with the Department of Health's (DOH) Maternal and Child Health Division to conduct a pilot project on the dissemination of hearing loss prevention and hearing milestones targeted at parents of adolescents and youth through a DOH program called Child Profile.
- **The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)** - The Social and Human Services program manager is working with OSPI's program titled, "Shared Video Reading Online Program." (SVROP) The SVROP improves deaf children English literacy utilizing American Sign Language via videoconferencing technology. ODHH is exploring the feasibility of providing resources to empower parents of deaf children to read books to their children in their homes.

Exclusive of these certified public manager capstone projects, ODHH partners with other departments and agencies in the following endeavors:

- **Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment** – The ODHH Director will work with the Executive Director of the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE). GCDE has indicated a willingness to explore funding for the installation of videoconferencing workstations at Work Source facilities to promote greater access for employment-related services.
- **Washington School for the Deaf (WSD)** – The WSD was once under the purview of the Department of Social and Health Services. At that time, ODHH and WSD enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with the exchange of information and technical assistance. Currently WSD reports to the Office of the Governor. The new WSD Superintendent and the new ODHH Director are reestablishing ties and exploring collaborative opportunities to meet statewide needs. One of these collaborations is an opportunity for parents to participate in Individualized Education Planning process via videoconferencing, thus minimizing the necessity for parents throughout the state to travel long-distance to Vancouver, WA where WSD is housed.
- **Department of General Administration** – ODHH is typically the DSHS lead agency to conduct annual reviews of the statewide sign language interpreting contract. ODHH has the prerequisite expertise and resources to assess the effectiveness and efficiency in the provision of interpreting services. ODHH provides technical assistance and consultation to the Department of General Administration on any revisions or amendments to the statewide contract utilized by the state of Washington.
- **Other Departments** – Last but not least in importance, ODHH has an ongoing working relationship with the following departments and agencies:
  - Department of Services for the Blind
  - Department of Information Services / Information Services Board
  - Office of Financial Management
  - Office of the Governor
  - Office of the Administrators for the Courts
  - Department of Emergency Management

## **Department of Social and Health Services**

ODHH is endeavoring to work with all DSHS administrations, divisions and programs to ensure administrative policies pertinent to hearing loss are updated and in compliance. For instance, ODHH recently raised the issue of accessibility to teletype device for the deaf (TTY) with lack of identifiable telephone numbers for TTY callers and trained staff on how to effectively utilize the TTY at a cabinet meeting. ODHH offers free technical assistance, TTY-training and deaf awareness presentations to any DSHS agency that requests it. ODHH will be working with interested administrations and divisions to offer and provide technical assistance in the establishment of videoconferencing workstations, using a low-cost broadband internet platform. Establishing point-of-entry, accessible, public sites will further the goal of ensuring compliance to provide reasonable accommodations. The provision of auxiliary aids through videoconferencing will be efficient and effective through three statewide contracts to provide: video relay services (VRS), video remote interpreting (VRI) services and video remote captioning (VRC) services. Potential benefits derived by DSHS employees and the public will include enhanced productivity, efficiency and effectiveness of traditional delivery systems.

- **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)** - ODHH is a participating member of the DVR DeafBlind Task Force addressing deafblind issues. DVR goals have been identified in a "Fourteen Points" document. ODHH and DVR are currently initiating a joint partnership on establishing a formal sign language assessment testing program to evaluate DSHS state employees eligible for dual language pay. ODHH will be providing technical assistance to establish videoconferencing workstations throughout local DVR offices.
- **Aging and Disability Services Administration (ADSA)** – Within ADSA's Division of Developmental Disabilities is the Infant-Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP). ODHH is a member of the ITEIP advisory council on early intervention. ODHH has been working with ITEIP to ensure the needs of deaf and hard of hearing infants and toddlers are addressed. ODHH will become an active participant on the Early Intervention for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children advisory council to be implemented per passage of recent legislation.
- **Office of Communications and Strategic Partnerships** – The Telecommunication Equipment Distribution program manager has a Certified Public Manager capstone project working with the Office of Communications and Strategic Partnerships. The office is coordinating a collaborative effort between ODHH, Children's Administration, Aging and Disability Services Administration, and the Information System Services Division to identify DSHS local offices needing teletype devices for the deaf (TTY), staff training, and telephone system upgrades. This collaborative endeavor ensures that individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing are able to place direct TTY calls to these local offices.
- **Other DSHS Administrations/Divisions** – Last but not least in importance, ODHH has an ongoing working relationship with the following DSHS administrations and divisions to maintain ODHH administration and operations:
  - ♦ Children's Administration
    - Division of Children and Family Services
    - Division of Licensed Resources
  - ♦ Economic Services Administration

#### Division of Community Services

- ◆ Medical Assistance Administration
- ◆ Management Services Administration
  - Central Contracts Services
  - Human Resources Division
  - Legislative Relations
  - Office of Research and Data Analysis

#### State-Wide Organizations and Associations

ODHH is a member of several statewide organizations and associations including the Washington State Association of the Deaf (WSAD), Washington State Association of the Self-Help for the Hard of Hearing (WASA-SHHH), and Washington State Deaf Blind Citizens (WSDBC). As an active member of these statewide organizations and attending their conferences and meetings, ODHH maintains a pulse on public opinion and stakeholder expectations of this agency.

#### ODHH/Regional Service Centers

ODHH staff meets regularly with the executive directors of the regional service centers on the deaf and hard of hearing on a quarterly basis. It has evolved from an ODHH-led meeting to a more collaborative partnership meeting. The agenda typically revolves around ODHH-Center contractual relationship on issues that impact all of the centers particularly programmatic and budgetary needs and areas of coordination. ODHH also regularly attends each of the center's annual board meetings to maintain a pulse on the capacity of the board's oversight role and to gauge public opinion and stakeholder expectations of the centers. The regional service centers and their facilities are located as follows:

Community Service Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Seattle
Tacoma Area Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities	Tacoma
Eastern Washington Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Spokane
Southeastern Washington Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Vancouver
Southwestern Washington Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Pasco
Northwest Washington Service Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Bellingham

#### Regional and Local Service Providers and Organizations

ODHH is a member of the Hearing, Speech and Deafness Center (HSDC) focus group of nonprofit organizations who serve the same or similar populations: deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind and speech challenged in King County and surrounding regions. The goals of the HSDC-led Service Provider Coalition (SPC) focus group are to avoid duplication of services, identify gaps in services and agencies appropriate to address these gaps, share mutual support and best practices and develop a cohesive communication "voice" to the communities about the needs. ODHH also enjoys a mutual relationship with several other service providers including Abused Deaf Women's Advocacy Services, Deaf-Blind Services Center, Seattle Mental Health and Provail, Inc. to name a few.

ODHH maintains a presence at many regional and local grass root organizational events such as meetings, socials, workshops held by the WASA-SHHH local chapters or deaf clubs to name a few. This presence enables ODHH to monitor trends in customer characteristics.

## STAKEHOLDERS INPUT

ODHH has begun the practice of formulating a strategic plan since 1999. This year marks the first time that stakeholders are being asked to provide input on the strategic plan itself. The process of involving various stakeholders is expected to undergo continuous refinement in the next several years.

Strategic thinking and development began with the town hall forums hosted by ODHH at the regional service centers on the deaf and hard of hearing which has been a longstanding practice. These town hall forums are an assessment tool of community needs. Some of the town hall forums were held on the following dates:

Location	Date
Vancouver	October 26, 2003
Spokane	November 7, 2003
Seattle	January 3, 2004
Bellingham	February 13, 2004
Seattle	April 16, 2004

The initial draft was compiled by the ODHH Director. The next step was requesting the ODHH staff to review the draft and make comments. An all day staff meeting to discuss the strategic plan in depth was held on March 8, 2004. The second draft was submitted to DSHS/Health and Rehabilitative Services Administration on March 15, 2004. After a HSRA review, DSHS reviewed all agencies' strategic plans including ODHH before submitting it to the Office of Financial Management (OFM) on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

A third draft was disseminated in early April to the DSHS/TRS Advisory Committee on Deafness, service providers, membership-based grassroots nonprofit organizations for public comments.

The final version of the strategic plan will be submitted to OFM in August. Between these two deadlines, the strategic plan itself will be continuously updated. However, strategic thinking, planning and implementation will be an ongoing process over the years to come.

## FUTURE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

ODHH faces a number of challenges mentioned throughout the Strategic Plan 2006-2011 document that will be addressed through strategic planning measures and several viable solutions have been identified that will be closely monitored for implementation as opportunities arise. Of critical importance to ODHH's statutory mission in the 2006-2011 time periods is the preservation of accessible telecommunication services via the relay and equipment distribution program. The primary management challenge is to maintain ODHH's program operations under its current budget structure in the face of dwindling revenue due to consumer transitions from telephone landlines to other emerging telecommunication technologies and the additional funding responsibility for the regional service centers imposed by the Legislature.

The major challenge lies in cost-effectively administering the social services program while adhering to the goal of achieving functional equivalency in telecommunications

programs and services pursuant to changing federal regulations that capture those emergent technologies which afford a greater level of functionality to persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind and speech-challenged. A critical shift in ODHH consumer characteristics is occurring with the increase in the numbers of persons with hearing loss as the population of persons nearing retirement increases. Additionally, pressures are mounting to address the lack of available qualified interpreters, to increase awareness of early intervention options for children and families, to provide for gap closure in independent living services for persons with hearing loss, and to holistically integrate a myriad of service providers into a seamless service delivery structure.

ODHH will address the challenges by creating opportunities for technical assistance to DSHS programs and local community agencies regarding effective auxiliary communication aids and services, as many aging people with progressive hearing loss do not use sign language and tend to eschew technological solutions to barriers created by hearing loss. Additionally, ODHH will continue to develop outreach opportunities and explore service delivery approaches for hard of hearing persons and ethnic communities, both of which have been traditionally underserved by the regional service centers. ODHH will continue to build upon current partnerships with state agencies that are currently serving those with hearing loss and will be developing relationships with other state agencies in order to maximize barrier-free points-of-entries to service delivery systems.



## Chapter 4 • Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Performance Measures

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The Strategic Plan is developed biennium and forms the basis for budget requests during the legislative appropriation process. The template for the Strategic Plan 2006-2011 is a significant change from the last Strategic Plan 2004-2009. To guide you as a reader, the goals and objectives indicate what ODHH wants to achieve. The strategies and performance measures indicate how ODHH will achieve them and be accountable.

The strategic plan addresses ongoing programs such as the Telecommunication Relay Service, Telecommunication Equipment Distribution, and the Social and Human Services (Regional Service Centers). Goals and objectives are to streamline the programs for enhanced productivity, efficiency and accountability. New initiatives address the underserved needs of the hard of hearing particularly through the Assistive Communication Technology program. Goals and objectives for the Communication Access Network and Assistive Communication Technology programs are geared toward removing communication barriers to state government services. All of these goals and objectives is about providing a public service and creating a public value for ODHH constituency and the general public.

### **A. IMPROVE CLIENT HEALTH AND SAFETY – PUBLIC VALUE**

**Goal 1:** Ensure WA Homeland Security plan address communication needs of individuals with hearing loss.

**Objectives:**

- Ensure WA Homeland Security plan poses no communication barriers

**Strategies:**

- Strategy - Participate in WA Homeland Security planning process
- (Activities: Contract with CSCDHH 911-TTY program; Maintain quality assurance oversight)

**Measures:**

- Number of attendance to WA Homeland Security planning meetings
- Status reports

This goal contributes to the following Balanced Scorecard perspectives:

Themes: ☒Public ☒Customer ☐Financial ☐Internal ☒Learning and Growth

**Goal 2:** Provide advocacy to ensure equal communication access to DSHS programs and services.

**Objectives:**

- Close communication gaps and eliminate barriers at DSHS delivery system points-of-entries

- Close communication gaps and eliminate barriers at vendor delivery system points-of-entries

**Strategies:**

- Strategy - Implement an information and referral program  
(Activities: Update resources; draft program guidelines)
- Strategy - Conduct an outreach and training program  
(Activities: Update curriculum; Update publications and training materials)
- Strategy - Provide advocacy services  
(Activities: Provide individualized intervention advocacy services; Advocate for collaboration on systematic changes)
- Strategy - Monitor and review regulations, policies and contracts  
(Activities: Collaborate with DSHS agencies; Encourage stakeholder participation; Revise DSHS administrative policies on reasonable accommodations and American Sign Language dual language pay)

**Measures**

- Categorize and track volume of requests for information and referral
- Categorize and track outreach and training activities including evaluations
- Track volume of requests for individualized advocacy cases with brief narrative outcomes
- Revised DSHS administrative policies

This goal contributes to the following Balanced Scorecard perspectives:

Themes: ☒Public ☒Customer ☐Financial ☐Internal ☒Learning and Growth

**B. IMPROVE CLIENT SELF-SUFFICIENCY – PUBLIC VALUE**

**Goal 1: Provide Telecommunication Relay Services to ensure and maintain functionally equivalent access to telecommunications.**

**Objectives:**

- Enhance telecommunication access to deaf individuals
- Enhance telecommunication access to hard of hearing individuals
- Enhance telecommunication access to deafblind individuals
- Enhance telecommunication access to speech challenged individuals
- Enhance consumer capability to utilize telecommunication services effectively

**Strategies:**

- Strategy - Provide a statewide telecommunication relay service program  
(Activities: Implement, monitor and oversee a new contract with relay service provider(s))
- Strategy – Conduct an effective consumer grievance and resolution program  
(Activities: Maintain a consumer grievance and resolution reporting system to FCC, DSHS and relay provider)
- Strategy - Conduct an effective consumer outreach and training program  
(Activities: Administer an ODHH outreach and training program)
- Strategy – Explore feasibility of including CapTel service within offered relay features (Activities: Monitor trends, conduct studies)

**Measures:**

- Categorize and track volume of relay calls and traffic as provided by vendor



- Track consumer grievances and resolutions
- Conduct an audit of the relay service provider

This goal contributes to the following Balanced Scorecard perspectives:

Themes: ☒Public ☒Customer ☐Financial ☐Internal ☐Learning and Growth

**Goal 2: Distribute specialized telecommunication equipment to ensure and maintain functionally equivalent access to telecommunications.**

**Objectives:**

- Distribute telecommunication equipment to eligible deaf individuals
- Distribute telecommunication equipment to eligible hard of hearing individuals
- Distribute telecommunication equipment to eligible deafblind individuals
- Distribute telecommunication equipment to eligible speech challenged individuals
- Enhance consumer capability to utilize specialized equipment effectively

**Strategies:**

- Strategy – Conduct a telecommunication equipment distribution and training program  
(Activities: Administrate program in accordance to state regulations; Contract with vendors to distribute equipment and train eligible individuals)
- Strategy – Conduct an effective consumer grievance and resolution program  
(Activities: Maintain a consumer grievance and resolution reporting system)

**Measures:**

- Categorize and track number of equipment distributed and training as provided by ODHH and vendors
- Track consumer grievances and resolutions

This goal contributes to the following Balanced Scorecard perspectives:

Themes: ☒Public ☒Customer ☐Financial ☐Internal ☐Learning and Growth

**Goal 3: Ensure the continued provision of services for consumers served by the regional service centers on deaf and hard of hearing.**

**Objectives:**

- Continue current efforts for communication barrier removal through advocacy and training
- Enhance consumer self sufficiency and employment opportunities
- Ensure barrier-free consumer access to public and private sectors
- Ensure sustainability and service delivery quality of regional service centers

**Strategies:**

- Strategy – Conduct a statewide social and human services program  
(Activities: Revise scope of services; Implement, monitor and oversee contracts with regional service centers)
- Strategy – Develop alternative service delivery models through collaborative partnerships with state agencies/entities to preserve existing services (Activities: Conduct cross-collaboration and service integration initiatives)
- Strategy - Diversify revenue streams (Activities: Conduct data analysis and needs assessments; Establish a grant procurement process; Build ODHH grant-making capacity including staff training for grant oversight responsibilities; Initiate grant-making process as pass-through agency)

**Measures (Optional):**

- Categorize and track number of unduplicated clients and type of services provided
- Seek and secure a grant designating ODHH as pass-through agency

This goal contributes to the following Balanced Scorecard perspectives:

Themes: ☒Public ☒Customer ☐Financial ☒Internal ☐Learning and Growth

**C. IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY AND SERVICE INTEGRATION – CUSTOMER SERVICE**

**Goal 1: Establish an infrastructure of access sites with videoconferencing workstation throughout the State of Washington.**

**Objectives:**

- Create accessible delivery system point-of entries
- Utilize functionality of videoconferencing technologies
- Foster connectivity between agencies, service providers, vendors and employers
- Enhance consumer sufficiency to utilize video telecommunication equipment effectively

**Strategies:**

- Strategy – Formalize a Communication Access Network program  
(Activities: Draft program guidelines; Install video telecommunication workstations; Provide technical assistance)

**Measures:**

- Track number of installed workstations and technical assistance provided

This goal contributes to the following Balanced Scorecard perspectives:

Themes: ☒Public ☒Customer ☐Financial ☒Internal ☐Learning and Growth

**Goal 2: Ensure that DSHS and contracted services are accessible to individuals with hearing loss through the provision of auxiliary aids.**

**Objectives:**

- Ensure provision of auxiliary aids in a timely manner and matches consumers' communication preferences
- Ensure availability of sign language interpreting services upon requests
- Ensure availability of captioning services upon requests
- Ensure availability of assistive listening device systems upon requests
- Ensure availability of specialized communication devices for the deafblind

**Strategies:**

- Strategy – Revise statewide sign language interpreting contract  
(Activities: Conduct needs assessment; Establish a stakeholder consultancy group; revise and monitor interpreting contract)
- Strategy – Propose an Assistive Communication Technology program  
(Activities: Conduct needs assessment; Establish stakeholder consultancy group; Draft and implement program guidelines)

- Strategy – Propose a statewide captioning contract  
(Activities: Conduct needs assessment; Establish a stakeholder consultancy group; Draft, implement, oversee captioning contract)
- Strategy – Procurement of development and/or purchase of emerging communication technology for the deafblind. (Activities: Reevaluate original RFP; Conduct additional studies)

**Measures:**

- Establish database to categorize and track volume of interpreting requests
- Identify agencies' facilities capable of providing captioning or ALDS
- Contract via an RFP or Sole Source with a manufacturer and/or distributor

This goal contributes to the following Balanced Scorecard perspectives:

Themes: ☒Public ☒Customer ☐Financial ☒Internal ☒Learning and Growth

## **D. IMPROVE CUSTOMER SERVICE – CUSTOMER SERVICE**

### **Goal 1: Assess client satisfaction with services provided by ODHH.**

**Objectives:**

- Identify and assess efficiency and effectiveness of services provided
- Promote quality assurance improvements

**Strategies:**

- Strategy – Conduct statewide client satisfaction surveys  
(Activities: Develop and implement a client satisfaction survey targeted at consumers of relay services, equipment distribution and regional service centers)

**Measures:**

- Categorize and track number of ODHH client satisfaction surveys completed

This goal contributes to the following Balanced Scorecard perspectives:

Themes: ☐Public ☒Customer ☐Financial ☒Internal ☒Learning and Growth

### **Goal 2: Establish stakeholder consultancy groups specializing in areas of identified needs.**

**Objectives:**

- Identify and assess communication gaps and barriers in delivery systems
- Identify and utilize people, technologies and resources to close gaps and eliminate barriers

**Strategies:**

- Strategy – Conduct a stakeholder consultancy group on interpreting  
(Activities: Develop and implement an ongoing consultancy group inclusive of freelance interpreters, referral agencies, interpreter training programs, consumers and DSHS representatives)
- Strategy – Conduct a stakeholder consultancy group on captioning  
(Activities: Develop and implement an ongoing consultancy group inclusive of freelance captioners, referral agencies, captioner training programs, consumers and DSHS representatives)

- Strategy – Conduct a stakeholder consultancy group on assistive listening device systems  
(Activities: Develop and implement an ongoing consultancy group inclusive of service providers, retailers, consumers and DSHS representatives)

**Measures:**

- Track status of stakeholder focus groups with narrative updates

Please check all Balanced Scorecard themes that apply:

Themes: ☒Public ☒Customer ☐Financial ☒Internal ☒Learning and Growth

**Goal 3: Conduct outreach and training about ODHH programs and services.**

**Objectives:**

- Increase awareness about ODHH
- Provide training opportunities to DSHS, contractors and general public

**Strategies:**

- Strategy – Conduct an outreach program  
(Activities: Develop and implement a statewide outreach program targeted at DSHS and general public)
- Strategy – Conduct a training program  
(Activities: Develop and implement a statewide training program on hearing loss, deaf culture, telecommunications and auxiliary aids)

**Measures:**

- Categorize and track volume of outreach activities as provided by ODHH
- Categorize and track volume of training activities as provided by ODHH

This goal contributes to the following Balanced Scorecard perspectives:

Themes: ☐Public ☒Customer ☐Financial ☒Internal ☐Learning and Growth

**E. INCREASE FINANCIAL RECOVERIES - FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE**

**Goal 1: Promulgate revised regulations on telecommunication equipment distribution program.**

**Objectives:**

- Enhance program efficiency and effectiveness
- Achieve consumer equitability in telecommunication equipment costs

**Strategies:**

- Strategy – Conduct national analysis of state-by-state comparison of delivery systems (Activities: Initiate research and information exchange with similar programs and report the findings, prepare comparative cost/benefit analysis of identified delivery systems)
- Strategy – Conduct promulgation of regulations  
(Activities: Develop and implement a rule-making project team)

**Measures:**

- Track status with narrative updates
- Track status of rule-making process with milestone and narrative updates

This goal contributes to the following Balanced Scorecard perspectives:  
Themes: ☐Public ☒Customer ☒Financial ☒Internal ☒Learning and Growth

**Goal 2: Revise scope of services provided by Regional Service Centers and implement performance-based outcome measurements.**

**Objectives:**

- Enhance efficiency and effectiveness of regional service centers
- Increased emphasis on direct client services
- Increased emphasis in provision of auxiliary aids on behalf of DSHS
- Ensure accountability of the public dollar for quality services

**Strategies:**

- Strategy – Implement a revised scope of services  
(Activities: Review scope of existing and potential services; Research, summarize and promote findings; Revise contracts' statement of work)
- Strategy – Implement a performance-based outcome measurement system  
(Activities: Research, summarize and promote findings; Incorporate into contract)

**Measures:**

- Track status with narrative reports of project: scope of services
- Track status with narrative reports of project: performance-based outcomes

This goal contributes to the following Balanced Scorecard perspectives:  
Themes: ☒Public ☒Customer ☒Financial ☒Internal ☒Learning and Growth

**F. INCREASE PREVENTION AND CARE - FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE**

**Goal 1: Initiate interagency cross-collaboration to develop a statewide children and adolescent hearing loss prevention initiative.**

**Objectives:**

- Provide resources on hearing loss prevention for parents of children and adolescents

**Strategies:**

- Strategy – Conduct a pilot project on a statewide hearing loss prevention program with Department of Health  
(Activities: Develop and publish a brochure for DOH Child Profile program)

**Measures**

- Final pilot project report

This goal contributes to the following Balanced Scorecard perspectives:  
Themes: ☒Public ☐Customer ☒Financial ☒Internal ☐Learning and Growth

**Goal 2: Initiate a demographic census of deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind and speech challenged populations.**

**Objectives:**

- Provide detailed demographic profiles related to hearing loss

**Strategies:**

- Strategy – Conduct a customer census and survey  
(Activities: Develop and implement a census)

**Measures:**

- Report on customer demographic data

This goal contributes to the following Balanced Scorecard perspectives:

Themes: ☐Public ☐Customer ☒Financial ☒Internal ☒Learning and Growth

**G. IMPROVE QUALITY ASSURANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY – INTERNAL PROCESS****Goal 1: Overhaul database for intranet and internet usage.****Objectives:**

- Accurate, secure and reliable data readily available and online
- Compile stakeholder demographic data and contact information
- Compile program data and statistics for operations and administration purposes
- Track consumer grievances and resolutions and client satisfaction levels

**Strategies:**

- Strategy – Construct a new database application program  
(Activities: Develop and implement a comprehensive database system)

**Measures**

- Report database application program milestones

This goal contributes to the following Balanced Scorecard perspectives:

Themes: ☐Public ☐Customer ☐Financial ☒Internal ☒Learning and Growth

**Goal 2: Revamp and streamline the information and referral delivery system.****Objectives:**

- Provide updated and useful resources and referrals to appropriate expertise
- Give prompt response turnaround time upon stakeholder requests

**Strategies:**

Strategy – Conduct an information and referral program (Activities: Develop and implement an information and referral program targeted at DSHS, contractors, businesses, nonprofits and general public)

**Measures:**

- Report information and referral program milestones

This goal contributes to the following Balanced Scorecard perspectives:

Themes: ☒Public ☒Customer ☐Financial ☒Internal ☐Learning and Growth

## **H. IMPROVE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND DIVERSITY – INTERNAL PROCESS**

### **Goal 1: Recruit a diverse and professional staff that comprises of ethnic minorities and individuals with disabilities**

#### **Objectives:**

- Ensure ethnic minorities and individuals with hearing loss are afforded employment opportunities

#### **Strategies:**

- Strategy – Maintain a recruitment plan  
(Activities: Draft and implement a recruitment plan)
- Strategy – Maintain a diversity plan  
(Activities: Update and implement a diversity plan)

#### **Measures:**

- Recruitment plan approved and on file
- Diversity plan approved and on file with progress reports

This goal contributes to the following Balanced Scorecard perspectives:

Themes: ☐Public ☐Customer ☐Financial ☒Internal ☒Learning and Growth

### **Goal 2: Provide opportunities for program managers to learn and apply principles of strategic planning, budgeting and performance-based outcomes.**

#### **Objectives:**

- Increased program responsibilities and accountability
- Transition to individual staff performance agreements and performance evaluations

#### **Strategies:**

- Strategy – Maintain a succession plan  
(Activities: Update and implement a succession plan)

#### **Measures:**

- Succession plan approved and on file with progress reports

This goal contributes to the following Balanced Scorecard perspectives:

Themes: ☐Public ☐Customer ☐Financial ☒Internal ☒Learning and Growth





## Chapter 5 • Organization Assessment Summary

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### PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

- Washington is unique in its structure of social supports through regional centers staffed with fluent ASL users who are also familiar with the needs of persons who are hard of hearing. Historical data review of consumer utilization of the regional service centers reveals an increase of consumer contacts from approximately 24,000 in 1998 to 42,000 contacts in 2003, a 66% increase. Much of the increase has come about due to improved contract monitoring activities and public outreach efforts, as well as the recruitment and hiring by the regional centers of advocacy staff with post-graduate level skills.
- ODHH will be undergoing a programmatic shift of emphasis more towards serving individuals who do not use sign language, yet are coping with barriers caused by hearing loss. A large sector of the hearing loss population consists of elderly people and ODHH will be working to identify ways to better access and serve this group.
- Washington Relay Services remains a national leader in the pursuit of functionally equivalent telecommunications opportunities. The cutting edge implementation of video-based communications network technologies in conjunction with new providers is one example of what ODHH is currently doing in ensuring functional equivalency. Due to funding constraints, a positive effort to implement enhanced telephone services for hard of hearing individuals had to be withdrawn.
- Performance targets for serving Native Americans and some rural areas of the state have been marginally achieved due to the loss of key staff responsible for diversity and outreach efforts. As staff recruitment efforts are completed, ODHH will be focusing more in this area and plans to address the needs of other ethnic minorities in collaborative partnership with other culturally appropriate entities.
- Internally, ODHH staff have capitalized on training opportunities and with the enhanced skill sets developed thereby, ODHH is poised to begin collaborating with other agencies to address services to parents, hard of hearing persons, and effectively manage change in program administration approaches as funding sources become more robust and varied.

### FINANCIAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT

#### Revenue

Telecommunication Excise Tax (Fund 540): The telephone excise tax is based on access lines (switched telephone land-lines). The excise tax, a surcharge, is currently levied at .14 cents per line per month with authority to make increases up to a cap at .19 cents per line per month. Recent historical data indicate a 3-5% average annual decrease in the total number of land lines. The historical decline in landlines reflects the national trend of switching to wireless cellular telephones. The declining number of landlines presents a loss of revenue. ODHH cannot collect

surcharges on disconnected landlines and does not have the statutory authority to collect surcharges on wireless lines. ODHH will have to begin surcharge tax increases in the next several years up to the surcharge cap of .19 cents.

### **Fund Balance**

Telecommunication Access Service (Fund 540 / Program 850): This revolving fund is based on an annual budget and any excess revenue over expenditures is carried over to the next fiscal year. The Fund 540 balance is consistently decreasing. The historical end-of-the year fund balances for the preceding fiscal years are displayed as follows:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Fund 540 Balance</u>
FY01	\$4,521,432
FY02	\$3,793,829
FY03	\$3,507,999
FY04	\$2,600,000*
	* Projection

This represents nearly a 50% decrease in the total fund balance over the last three years. With the current trend of declining revenues, conservative budget projections indicate a depletion of the Fund 540 surplus dollars by FY08 despite the surcharge tax increases.

### **Cost Pressures**

ODHH will be releasing a Request for Proposal for relay services this Fall 2005. When a contract is awarded to a relay service provider effective in FY06, it is projected that the price per minute (PPM) will increase 25% due to rising pool of labor costs at the existing relay call centers. This 25% increase has been observed in the monitoring of other states' awarding of new contracts.

Other cost pressures involve the social and human services provided by the regional service centers. The budget projections include a 3% annual vendor rate increase. Three regional service centers' facilities are under scope of the Referendum 37 mandate which provided a rent-free infrastructure of facilities serving people with disabilities. One of the Centers received a 20 year lease extension from the City of Spokane. Two other centers will be affected in March 2005 (Seattle) and April 2009 (Tacoma). The impact is that these centers will begin to pay market-rate rent/lease of the existing facilities which is not affordable.

### **COST REDUCTION STRATEGIES**

ODHH currently distributes specialized telecommunication equipment free of charge to individuals under the 200% poverty level. However, the regulations will be under a review and a study conducted to determine a more equitable approach to distributing equipment to all eligible applicants: a study to include looking at instituting a chargeback, based on a sliding scale, for the equivalent cost of a regular phone purchased at a local retailer.

ODHH will be looking into conducting a comprehensive analysis of other states' equipment distribution delivery systems to determine which initiatives would produce the greatest cost-saving measures. For example, an initiative to implement a system allowing consumers to apply a voucher directly to a retailer could save

considerable shipping costs. Additionally, cost-benefit studies of the current equipment training program as provided by contractors to consumers will be conducted.

Regarding the regional service centers, ODHH is looking into the feasibility of housing some of these regional service centers in DSHS facilities, particularly co-location sites where various agencies are housed within a building. This would promote the sustainability of these regional service centers by reducing its' rising administrative overhead costs. ODHH will also be weighing between a fee for services payment structure or a performance-based outcome measurement payment system to be implemented by FY06. This will place greater emphasis on accountability and direct client services.

## **AGENCY SELF ASSESSMENT**

Last September 2003, the staff identified the top three or four strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) that ODHH is experiencing or anticipating. A summary of the SWOT analysis is as follows:

**Strengths** – Staff is dedicated to the mission and has the knowledge and abilities to fulfill objectives. Strong fiscal management, operating within the budget. Service delivery is highlighted with professionalism, accessibility, and prompt response to DSHS agency requests for training as well as individualized services provided directly to clients.

**Weaknesses** – Office protocols, communications, roles, teamwork delegation need to be clearly defined and articulated. Existing Information Technology infrastructure is inadequate and hinders productivity and performance measurements. Interagency relations between DSHS and ODHH need to be developed and visibility heightened. Inadequate outreach to diverse communities and response time to requests for conflict resolution with vendors.

**Opportunities** – Service integration goals and technological advances provide tools to bridge the gaps in delivery system and create opportunities for service expansion. Increased federal, state, and local funding sources through cellular/wireless excise tax, grants and interagency agreements. Recognition for the ODHH initiatives (i.e. Telebraille RFP) creates partnership opportunities to collaborate on national, regional, statewide and local level with government, nonprofits and businesses. Shifting to aligning measurable performance outcomes with programs and focusing on providing technical assistance regarding communication access.

**Threats** – Potential for CapTel to divert and drain resources put the budget at risk and adversely affects other program areas. The 19 cents cap on excise tax limits CapTel expansion. Client expectations are higher in face of competing stakeholders' needs with inadequate community collaboration. The shrinking pool of interpreters affects the ability for DSHS agencies, businesses, and other agencies to provide reasonable accommodations.

**Focus Areas** – Monitor CapTel and explore the feasibility of offering CapTel services. Streamline office protocols, strengthen the IT system and promote staff development in areas of strategic initiatives (i.e. grant/contract management) Heighten visibility within DSHS and diverse communities through greater outreach, education and

training. Reassess the roles/contracts with Regional Service Centers and explore the feasibility of integrating requests for accommodations (interpreting, captioning, listening devices) on behalf of DSHS.





This document is also available electronically at:

[www1.dshs.wa.gov/strategic](http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/strategic)

Persons with disabilities may request a hard copy by contacting DSHS at: 360.902.7800, or TTY: 800.422.7930.

Questions about the strategic planning process may be directed to DSHS Constituent Services at: 1.800.737.0617.

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